

THE
HISTORIC EPISCOPATE

AN ESSAY ON

The Four Articles of Church Unity

PROPOSED BY THE AMERICAN HOUSE OF BISHOPS AND
THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

BY

CHARLES WOODRUFF SHIELDS, D.D., LL.D.

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The historic episcopate

To

The Rev^d William M. Paxton, D.D.,

With faith in
The Presbyterian Doctrine
of
The Catholic Visible Church,

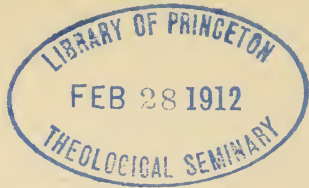
From The Author

Charles W. Shields

Easter, 1894.



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CHARLES WOODRUFF SHIELDS, D.D., LL.D.

PROFESSOR IN PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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NOTE

The following essay has been read by special invitation before various assemblies representing the different Christian denominations, Roman Catholic and Protestant, in the cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. It is now printed, for the first time, in answer to many requests for its publication.



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THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE

IT has been said that the greatest wonder of the World's Fair was its Parliament of Religions. It put on exhibition not merely the principal Heathen beliefs, but the various Christian denominations, with champions rehearsing their claims. Whether it shall pass away like another Babel or open a new Pentecost, depends upon the use now made of its lessons. And its chief lesson was not the supremacy of Christianity, which required no proof; but the absolute need of harmony and unity in order to establish its supremacy throughout the earth. Let that lesson go unheeded, and the Christian Religion may only have exposed its weakness in the face of its enemies. Henceforth the conquest of heathenism, as well as the maintenance of civilization, will demand more than ever the reunion of Christendom.

Let us approach this momentous question, as far as we may, with strict definitions and clear conceptions. While such preliminaries are essential to all good thinking and sound opinion,

they are especially needful in dealing with so difficult a problem as Church unity, and one already so beclouded with vague terms and specious phrases. Several distinctions are to be premised and maintained throughout the inquiry.

CHURCH UNITY DEFINED.

First of all, Church unity should be distinguished from Christian unity or the oneness of believers in Christ. There is a sense in which all Christians are one already, and one simply because they are Christians. They are one in the unity of the spirit. They are spiritually united to Christ by faith and love as branches of one vine and members of one body. They thus form one holy brotherhood, one mystical fellowship, one communion of saints, the world over. This one invisible Church, as it is often called, persists in and through all visible churches and denominations, survives their mutations and destructions, and remains intact even amid their conflicts and schisms. And it cannot be too highly exalted in the present discussion. That we are all one in Christ is an admitted fact from which we proceed, and the common ground upon which we stand. Without it we could not even consider the question before us. But while Christian unity is thus to be held as the condition precedent to Church unity it is not Church unity itself. By a

vague figure of speech it is sometimes confounded with Church unity, and even miscalled organic unity in allusion to a metaphorical organism ; but in a strict sense it can only be applied to the spiritual fellowship of saints or invisible Church. Nevertheless this invisible Church ever becomes more or less visible in organic form and strives to manifest its oneness. It can no more exist without an organism or an organization than the soul without the body. Organization, if not essential to its very being, is at least indispensable and of divine origin and warrant. The institutions of Christianity, its ministry and sacraments, are revealed in the Scriptures, no less than its doctrines. In fact, but for its institutions we should have had neither its Scriptures nor yet its doctrines. As a bare Gospel, apart from the Church, it might have died out in the first century, with no more echo in history than the teachings of Socrates or the morals of Seneca. It became, however, a compact organization in the midst of pagan society, with its sacraments and its Scriptures ; and it continued thus compact and undivided for some centuries afterward. In that one Catholic Apostolic Church we have an example and model of Church unity, not only as consistent with Christian unity but as expressing and maintaining it. Indeed, it is only in and through such Church unity that Christian unity can find

due and full expression. Without such unity it must remain as a vague ideal or crude sentiment, if it be not made a mere pretext for schism and excuse for sectarianism. The most factious sectaries are sometimes loudest in their appeals to the Christian unity which they have defied and obscured, yet cannot destroy. Never let it be forgotten that Christian unity, spiritual oneness, already exists as a divine fundamental fact in the churches; and the real problem is, how to express this Christian unity in an organic Church unity which shall exhibit the mystical body of Christ as no longer mutilated and distracted, but with its various members in normal exercise and conscious harmony.

FEDERATION OF CHURCHES.

Church unity should also be distinguished from Church union or the federation of denominations.¹ The different Christian bodies in our country have often become externally conjoined without internal modification or concession, somewhat as sovereign states form leagues and compacts. Under the impulse of common aims and the press-

¹ It should be premised that, throughout this essay, the word "denomination" will be used in the legal sense (see Preface of the Prayer-book), as applicable alike to all Christian bodies, Catholic or Protestant, whatever may be their ecclesiastical claims or merits.

ure of common dangers they have been combined in Bible and Tract Societies, in Sunday-School Unions, in Boards of Domestic and Foreign Missions, and in various associations for promoting temperance, purity, charity, peace, and other Christian virtues. Such coalitions, though purely superficial and transient, besides furthering the good ends in view, have served to demonstrate an essential agreement amid the general diversity. We have also had examples of a more organic union of denominations, based upon affinity in doctrine, polity, and worship, such as the recent federation of the different Anglican bodies in Canada. In some cases divided Churches have been reunited, as when the Old and New School Presbyterian Churches again became one ecclesiastical body. The Methodist Episcopal and Protestant Methodist Churches were merged together in the same manner. At first sight this would seem to be a most hopeful field in which to labor for Church unity. Why should the Protestant Episcopal and Reformed Episcopal Churches remain apart after the Chicago Declaration? Why do not the Dutch and German Reformed Churches come together, when they are so much alike that it is hard to tell one from the other? What should hinder the great Methodist Churches, Northern and Southern, or the Presbyterian Churches, North and South, from

reuniting as one Church since we are under one government? Might not the different Lutheran Synods and Councils be colligated? Could not the large family of Baptist denominations be at least confederated? Is there anything in the claims of local autonomy to forbid a more organic union of Congregational Churches? Ought not the chief denominations thus to unite in kindred groups? And then, on the basis of such special unions, why not build up a general confederation in some grand national council of denominations, a sort of Congress of the United Churches of the United States, having its Senate of Bishops as the conservative element, and its House of Presbyters as the progressive element, with its ratio of Congregational representation and its legislation restricted to domestic charities and foreign missions? What a magnificent spectacle would such an ecclesiastical confederacy present to the rest of Christendom! How it would shine like a constellation in the firmament of the Universal Church! The bare mention of it is inspiring and elevating. But the bare mention also shows it to be crude and visionary. At the first touch of analysis the nebulous splendor dissolves into the stars of which it is composed. Confederation is not unification. It is but a mechanical union of social bodies, not their chemical fusion and vital growth. It has twice proved a failure in our po-

litical history; first, when it could not hold the United States together, and afterward when it strove to tear them apart. There could be no perfect union of Churches, or of States, without some mutual concession of sovereignty, some submission to common authority, some agreement in essential opinions. At its best estate, on its face, denominational confederation is but masked denominationalism, and a mere temporary expedient, carrying its own dissolution with it. Often it is only a truce in mid battle, or patching of old family quarrels. If it serve as a first step toward Church unity it cannot be the last one, but must advance or else recoil with fresh estrangement and harsh assertion of sectarian prejudice worse than before. First or last, whatever else it may be, it is not Church unity.

ASSIMILATION OF DENOMINATIONS.

Church unity should be distinguished still further from Church uniformity or the assimilation of denominations. This is the other extreme from federation. It would efface denominational distinctions and reduce all Christian bodies to one type of doctrine, polity, and worship. It is a process which seems to have been long going on in our country. The Churches of the Old World as transferred to the New, and compacted together under one political system, have been growing

like each other through social intercourse and unconscious imitation. Protestants have been reviving the Catholic sisterhood and fraternity under new names and guises; while Catholics are resorting to the Protestant platform and newspaper in their conflicts and troubles. Episcopals have restored Presbyterian elements to their polity and extempore prayers to their liturgy; while Presbyterians are recovering Episcopal agencies of administration and liturgical modes of worship. Both Presbyterians and Episcopals have learned something from the Methodist revival; while Methodists have learned to have choirs and divinity schools as well as camp-meetings and lay preachers. Lutherans, Congregationalists, Baptists, in like manner, are taking on all the hues of the Church year and ritual. At first sight there might seem to be no limit to such assimilation. We are ready to fancy the denominations blending into a sort of composite likeness. But on closer view the superficial resemblances vanish, and the old essential differences assert themselves. Each will be found prizing more the distinction which it keeps than the differences which it has effaced. And such distinctions cannot and should not be wholly obliterated. Absolute uniformity is not possible either in the world of nature or of grace. According to the chosen metaphors of Scripture, the Church is one

vine, but with different branches ; one body, but with various members ; one building, but of composite structure. In political society we see the greatest variety of classes, parties, and opinions ; aristocratic, democratic, republican, socialist, populist ; no one of them absorbing or exterminating the rest. As little in religious society may we hope to find all Christians at once becoming Baptists, or Congregationalists, or Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Episcopalians, or Romanists. Much less could they be made alike by any civil or ecclesiastical process. The experiment of enforced uniformity has been tried for several hundred years in Episcopal England and Presbyterian Scotland with only a brood of non-conforming sects growing up around both establishments. The same lesson is taught us here by the conflict of usage with rubrics, by the disuse of directories, and by the rise of heresy under the strictest creeds and confessions. All experience shows that a rigid uniformity in doctrine and ritual could only breed dissent and schism, and issue in renewed failure. Were it attained, instead of promoting Church unity, it would destroy it.

The definition of a true Church unity is now before us. It would not ignore our common Christianity, but would more fully express and maintain it. It would not undervalue denominational confederation, but would look beyond it

to a more perfect union of denominations. It would not obliterate denominational peculiarities, or sacrifice them to a cast-iron uniformity, but it would legitimate, subordinate, and readjust them in one large ecclesiastical system as different members knit together in the one living body of Christ. In a word, it would maintain unity in variety as well as variety in unity.

FALSE ECCLESIASTICISM.

At this point we shall be met by several objections which must be cleared out of the way before we can proceed. It will be said that Church unity tends to ecclesiasticism. History will be invoked to warn us against any renewed compact of denominations as involving the latent evils of churchly power and state religion. But history does not repeat itself, where the conditions are changed; nor do revolutions ever go backward. The dread of priestcraft which once had fitness in European countries has no place in modern civilization, though it may linger as an inherited prejudice in some of our popular discussions and partisan appeals. With the pope himself little more than a state prisoner at Rome, any supremacy of the papacy in international politics has become a dead issue. With the Anglican and Scottish establishments already doomed and waning, any domination of prelacy or presbytery in

our political affairs is but the ghost of a dead issue. And to imagine the wrangling sects of this country combining to seize the United States Government and convert it into a theocracy is to imagine a species of ecclesiasticism which cannot be stated without showing its intrinsic absurdity. Let us not be frightened by the mere word "ecclesiasticism." The real dangers which threaten us are not in the ecclesiastical sphere, but in the political or social sphere; not in the hierarchy of the dead past, but in the anarchy of the living present. And against such dangers Church unity simply means the mustering together of our common Christianity in defence of our common civilization.

FALSE DENOMINATIONALISM.

There is a kindred objection, that Church unity would destroy the witness-bearing character of the denominations. At their origin each of them had some high mission to fulfil, some great problem to solve, some special doctrine or principle to uphold. The Lutheran and the Huguenot protested against the papacy. The Covenanter made a solemn league against prelacy. The Puritan fled away from a false ecclesiasticism into the wilderness. The Methodist broke the bonds of formalism with a pentecostal revival. These are not small achievements, to be lightly

esteemed or rashly put in peril. Granting them, however, it remains to ask, whether by this time such denominational missions have not been sufficiently accomplished, and whether in this country they are any longer in place. Why continue mere Protestants in a land where Roman Catholicism is coming under American influences if not already in the ordeal of reformation; mere Covenanters, where Episcopacy has long since conceded nearly everything for which the Presbyterian party in the Church of England contended; mere Puritans, where the lost ideal of the Church is coming back into the Puritan consciousness; or mere revivalists, where even orthodoxy and ritualism are leavened with Methodist usages and influences. Would it not be better to bring together such denominational types as complementary traits of Christian character and harmonize such denominational claims as rival schools or tendencies in one Church system? As expressed in diverse organizations called churches, they become frightfully exaggerated; they tend to obscure or mutilate more essential truths; and they lead to immense waste, loss, and conflict in all missionary and humanitarian efforts. Whereas the same different beliefs and usages as tolerated in one organization or in one church would retire from public view; would sink into due relative insignificance; would modify and check one

another; and would render both missions and charities more compact and efficient. There is, in fact, no good thing, for which the denomination-
alist pleads, which in such a system might not be retained, while much sin and evil that he laments would be avoided. Church unity, it has been aptly said, is "not anti-denominational but super-denominational."

FEASIBILITY OF CHURCH UNITY.

The most practical objection is, that Church unity, however desirable in itself, is not feasible. Often it is accepted as a "pium desiderium," a consummation devoutly to be wished, but not to be actually sought after; and sometimes its advocates are only pitied as amiable visionaries. Against such scepticism stands not merely the scriptural ideal of one Church but all analogy and much experience. Take the analogy of living nature. As we ascend the organic scale, from the mollusk up to the mammal, rank above rank, species after species, we find increasing unity amid increasing variety, the more complex the more compact the structure, until at the summit in man, as naturalists tell us, all inferior organisms are recapitulated as many members in one body, and set forth as the very masterpiece of creation. And what God has wrought in the kingdom of nature, shall He not yet work out in

the kingdom of grace? Take the nearer analogy of political society. In our own country, during less than two centuries, we have seen the most varied nationalities, English, French, Dutch, Spanish; in the most varied climates, Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western; with the most varied creeds, Catholic, Huguenot, Puritan, Cavalier, Covenanter; under the most varied governments, theocratic, monarchic, aristocratic, democratic, all together emerging at length as the United States with the realized motto, "E pluribus Unum." And what worldly men have done in their political relations, cannot Christian men do in their religious relations? Go back to the experience of early Christian society. In that first organization of the Church we see congregational, presbyterial, episcopal institutions, but no separate Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist denominations with the apostles in one, the presbyters in another, and a few synagogues in the third. We find various schools of doctrine as distinct as those of Luther, Calvin, and Arminius, but no Pauline, Petrine, and Johannean churches so-called, unchurching one another for a dogma or a rite. On the contrary, we behold all our unhappy divisions dwelling together in one undivided Apostolic Church. And what the Church has been once, may it not become again? Look abroad in Christian society now. Every denom-

ination is asserting unity against diversity. The Baptists and the Congregationalists, in spite of their localism, would become national and comprehensive. The Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Methodists would be called churches "of the United States." The Reformed would be no longer Dutch or German. The Protestant Episcopalians would drop their very name from the title of the Church. The Catholics would show themselves American as well as Roman. All, in one form or another, have before them the ideal of one American Catholic Church.

THE NEW PROMISE OF CHURCH UNITY.

I do not forget the past experiments in Church unity. Has not the Western church for twelve centuries been vainly trying to make peace with the Eastern church? Did not the Eastern church refuse to make peace with the Reformed churches? Could the Reformed churches even make peace among themselves? Were popes, prelates, and presbyteries successful in securing uniformity or conformity among the churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland? Have the numerous eirenicons since devised by large-hearted ecclesiastics like Usher, Stillingfleet, Pusey, Muhlenberg proved any more successful? Why follow in the train of these dismal failures? For a twofold reason: first, because it is only through re-

peated failures that we can pass to ultimate success; and also, because former causes of failure are dying out in our age and country. Geographical barriers to unity have disappeared. The Eastern and Western churches, the German, French, English, and Scottish churches, are here compacted together within one territory and fusing into one nationality. Political barriers have disappeared. The temporal power of the Pope, the civil establishment of prelacy and presbytery, have given place to free churches in a free land, conspiring under one government with one patriotic aim. Dogmatic barriers are disappearing. Lutheranism, Calvinism, Arminianism, by their own attritions, concessions, and revisions are approaching one common faith and ritual. At the same time, powerful causes of unity are working. Democratic influences are undermining the walls of mere Romanism. A papal theocracy has humbled monarchies, and subdued aristocracies, but never has it conquered a democracy; and out of such a conflict it could only emerge itself conquered. Social influences are consolidating Protestantism. The Huguenot, the Puritan, the Cavalier, the Covenanter have been intermarrying for several generations, until now he who fights unity will have war in his own members and in his own household. Religious influences are working. The spirit of unity itself is seizing the

Christian masses like a passion, and carrying their wrangling leaders along with them as with the might of a revolution. Never before in any Christian century, nowhere else in any Christian country, have all the conditions been so favorable for realizing the long-lost ideal of one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

In order to keep this discussion within the region of facts, two principles are important, the one as to the scope, and the other as to the basis of unity. The first is that a true church unity must include all existing churches within its scope. Its horizon must be as wide as Christendom, and its point of view must be taken in the midst of the churches and not within the narrow pale of any one of them. Otherwise we shall lose sight of large portions of the Christian world, or only seek to unify some portions against the others.

THE CLAIM OF THE HISTORIC CHURCHES.

First of all, we must take into our view the great historic churches which have come down to us from the Apostles' time. It is hard to believe that the devil has governed the Christian Church for twenty centuries. We shall fly in the face of universal Providence if we try to date the Christian era from the Diet of Worms, or to close it at

the Council of Nice. The divine work of the Universal Church is not to be tossed aside as mere ecclesiasticism, that a few Christians at this late day may build it all over again. The Eastern Greek Church and the Western Latin Church have existed and still exist by the grace of God, as well as the modern Protestant Church or the latest Christian meeting that is called a church. Nor can we belittle their connection with the question as sentimental, academic, chimerical, or in any sense foreign to us. I do not refer merely to the few Greek congregations among us, on our eastern and western shores. Politically we are in the same boat with at least eight million Roman Catholic fellow-citizens; and sooner or later we may have to unite with them against the combined terrors of mutiny and shipwreck; in plainer words, against sectarianism and infidelity. As fast as that great spiritual organization under the plastic force of its new American environment sheds its Romanism and becomes simply American, national, and patriotic, will it prove an immense gain to our common Christianity as well as a safeguard to our common country. Already it is practically with us on the great moral questions of the day, bringing its rank and file as a compact fighting mass into the battle with social vice and sin. It is true, the *Filioque* in the Nicene Creed and the dogma of papal in-

fallibility are present barriers to unity. But it is also true that reforming influences are at work, for which due allowance must be made. It remains to be seen whether existing obstacles may not be reduced to dead letter or disappear in the unifying process. Moreover, it is a duty to make the terms of fraternity broad enough to embrace even those who erect barriers against it. Theoretically at least, if not as yet practically, the Greek and Latin communions must be included with the Anglican and American in any scheme of true church unity.

THE CLAIM OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES.

At the same time we must not wholly exclude from such a scheme the less historic churches which date from the Reformation, or even the denominations which have followed in their train, Protestantism, for all its faults, cannot be reckoned a sheer mistake and failure. No less than Catholicism, it has the reason of its existence in divine providence and its warrant in a divine success. For four centuries it has been making a history of its own. The Congregationalist, Baptist, and Methodist communions, though detached from the historic church, have largely restored the primitive Christianity. The Lutheran and Reformed churches claim to have renewed the historic church, not to have destroyed it, retain-

ing its creeds and portions of its ritual. The Church of Scotland, as by law established, declared it had been "reformed from popery, not by prelates, but by presbyters as the only successors left by Christ and his apostles in the Church;" and to-day it has its own Catholic revival of ritual, as distinct from Oxford as from Rome, and by no means what is vulgarly termed among us "aping the Episcopalians." Now, even the straitest Protestant Episcopal churchman, who looks upon such bodies around him as pseudo-ecclesiastical or quasi-ecclesiastical sects having no right to the name of churches, must recognize among them certain ecclesiastical institutions, or ecclesiastical theories, or ecclesiastical aspirations, tending toward his own ecclesiastical system, together with acknowledged Christian methods and benefits which might well be legitimated and included within his own system. He would not deny their value merely as training-schools. Nor can he any longer, in this country at least, claim a monopoly of the culture and taste which once made the Anglican church a social caste in little sympathy with surrounding Christianity. Among liturgical denominations the prayer-book itself is ceasing to act as a social distinction. Other less cultured denominations may still hold doctrines of the church and sacraments which are hinderances to unity. But the

most independent of Independents are not beyond the reach of churchly influences and unifying impulses. Many of the Baptists favor open communion; and some Unitarians would object less to the Nicene Creed than Greek Churchmen. In the long future, the extreme left wing of Protestantism as well as the extreme right wing of Catholicism may yet react toward the centre. Neither should be cast outside the pale of Christian fraternity. In a word, if we would deal with all the facts, we must somehow prospectively, if not immediately, include both the historic churches and the reformed churches, the oldest denominations and the latest sects, as alike within the scope of a true church unity.

THE NEED OF A PRACTICAL CONSENSUS.

The other practical principle is, that the true Church unity must be based upon the actual consensus of all existing churches in doctrine, ritual, and polity. With their ideal consensus we can have but little to do. In what doctrines or articles of faith they ought to be consentient; what dogmas should be rejected, or retained, or modified in order to make them rightly consentient, is largely a matter of pure speculation. Many of us could not agree as to the terms of such an ideal agreement. If some of us should frame such an agreement, satisfactory to ourselves, others would not

assent to it. In the end we might only be adding one more sect to the medley, and so make confusion worse confounded. Church unity cannot thus be built up on the ruins of existing churches.¹

Nor have we any more to do with a future consensus of the churches, to be reached in the progress of learning and liberty. In what doctrines they will be consentient ultimately in coming generations, or what dogmas will have been lost or gained in the Church of the millennium, is sheer beyond our ken. Some of us may doubt if such a perfect agreement will ever come; and any of us who hope for it could not now project it without the gift of prophecy, as well as the understanding of all mysteries. Church unity cannot be built after any prophetic model let down from heaven, ready made and complete, like the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse.²

¹This may be the peril of the "Brotherhood of Christian Unity" and any like associations, which ignore all existing churches for the sake of some meagre consensus of Christianity with other religions or some common Christian faith which contains only the minimum of Christian truth and is too vague and ideal to be made an organic bond of true Church unity.

²In this direction seem to tend those advocates of the Roman Catholic Church, or of the Protestant Episcopal Church, or of any other denominational church, who hope to realize church unity exclusively in their own organization at some remote millennium by destroying or supplanting or converting all the other churches and denominations of the country.

It is only with the actual, the existing, consensus of the churches that we can deal. Not the things which should be believed among us ; nor yet the things which will be believed among us ; but “ the things which are most surely believed among us,” as St. Luke expresses it—this is the practical question. To this practical question the catholic thought of the age is already addressing itself ; and it has at length found voice and audience.

THE CHICAGO-LAMBETH PROPOSALS.

It has become the rare honor and privilege of one of the smallest denominations—small in numbers but large in an intelligent survey of the situation—to lead all the rest in this great movement, and even to be followed by the mother Church of England. The Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church, from their high point of view, have undertaken to “ set forth in order a declaration of the things which are most surely believed among us.” In other words, they have formulated an actual consensus of the churches as the basis of their unity ; an existing creed, ritual, and polity in which they are already more or less consentient, and not some new or imaginary creed, ritual, and polity in which they cannot become consentient without utterly abandoning their respective standards or destroying their identity in some ruthless process of unification.

This practical quality of the Episcopal declaration is one of its chief merits. In its very nature it is a unifying manifesto. It exhibits to the world the great things in which Christian bodies can agree, and exalts them above the small things in which they differ. Each of the four articles, the Scriptures, the Creeds, the Sacraments, the Episcopate, will be found to serve this purpose as successively stated.¹ The Holy Scriptures are already accepted as the rule of faith by all Christian denominations between the extremes of Romanism and Protestantism, however varied may be their interpretation of those Scriptures. The Nicene Creed is the sufficient statement of the Christian faith, though it be supplemented with

¹ The four articles, as proposed at Chicago, and amended by the Lambeth Conference, are as follows :

First. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as containing all things necessary to salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

Second. The Apostles' Creed as the Baptismal symbol ; and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

Third. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unflinching use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

Fourth. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

denominational symbols, such as the Augsburg Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Anglican Articles of Religion, the Westminster Confession of Faith, or the latest American product of creed making. The two sacraments of Christ are ministered with His appointed words and elements in all communions, the simplest as well as the most ritualistic, not less by the Baptist who insists upon immersion than by the Romanist who withholds the cup from the laity. The Historic Episcopate is everywhere adaptable to Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians of every type, as well to those without as to those within the pale of that Episcopate. In a word, if the Christian denominations of this land were in search of a canon, creed, ritual, and polity, which should express their consensus as against their dissensus, the essentials in which they agree as distinguished from the non-essentials in which they differ, they would find them in the four Principles of the Chicago-Lambeth Declaration.

CATHOLICITY OF THE FOUR ARTICLES.

Another great merit of that Declaration is its absolute catholicity. There is no denomination-ism whatever in its terms. Although it emanates from one of the denominations, it proposes nothing peculiar to that denomination; not the Prayer-book, not the Articles of Religion, not

even the Ordinal in its details. On the contrary the things which it proposes are also possessed or shared by other denominations. The Holy Scriptures are the common heritage of Christendom, Greek and Latin as well as Anglican, American as well as European. The ecumenical creeds are professed by the Greek, Roman, Lutheran, Reformed, and Presbyterian communions, as well as by the Protestant Episcopal communion. The Sacraments of our Lord are scrupulously observed by many if not all other Christian bodies than those which follow the use of the English Liturgy. The historic Episcopate is a universal institution common to Eastern and Western Christendom, and not confined to the American House of Bishops. As this last point may not be as obvious as the other three points, and yet is pivotal to the whole discussion, it is important here to give it special attention.

CATHOLICITY OF THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE.

The Historic Episcopate would remain in this country if the organization known as "The Protestant Episcopal Church" did not exist. It would still be represented to us by the Russian Greek and Roman Catholic Churches; encumbered, it is true, with various dogmas, but with dogmas no better, or no worse, than theories which encumber it in other communions and act

as hinderances to unity. Indeed, it is quite conceivable that Roman bishops in some new reformation, more justly conservative than ours, may yet offer the episcopate to their Protestant brethren with some stronger motives than any that now appear in the tender of it from another quarter. In that event the whole ecclesiastical situation would be changed. The great Lutheran communion would be found more closely allied to the Roman than to the Anglican Episcopate. The Reformed bodies, Dutch, French, and German, might more naturally return to the historic primacy of Rome than to the local primacy of Canterbury. All Protestants, in fact, might then unite in recognizing a *de facto* headship of Western Christendom. And thus the Mother of Churches could grow as rapidly by conversion as she has been growing by emigration. Stranger things have happened. Be all this, however, as it may, treat it as a mere quixotic fancy, the fact remains, that the Protestant Episcopal Church has no exclusive property in the Episcopate, but only shares it, and shares it very largely, with other and greater historic churches in America as well as Europe.

It should also be remembered that at one time in the history of that church it was nearly on a par with other American denominations as to the episcopate now deemed so essential to its very

being. For more than one hundred years, during the whole colonial period, the so-called "Episcopal churches" scattered along the Atlantic coast were practically without the Episcopate and even without episcopal visitations. Successive generations of communicants grew up unconfirmed, and the clergy had little more than the distant oversight of the Bishop of London. It is well known that the popular dread of an Episcopal establishment was one of the causes of the American Revolution. After the rupture with the mother country it became still more doubtful whether the Episcopate could be procured from the Church of England. In the emergency there was even some thought of applying for the foreign orders of Sweden. But the patriarchal Bishop White declared that in such circumstances "a scrupulous adherence to episcopacy would be sacrificing the substance to the ceremony,"¹ and lest the essentials of preaching and worship should utterly lapse he sketched a provisional polity with presbyterial ordination, and other features thoroughly Presbyterian. When at length the Episcopate was conferred by the English Bishops it simply supervened upon that provisional presbyterian organization as it might

¹The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered, p. 19. By the Rev. Dr. William White, afterward Bishop of Pennsylvania.

now supervene upon any other Presbyterian body; and it is still, in thought at least, as separable from the one as it is in fact separate from the other.

It should further be observed, that the college of Bishops has logically (I do not say formally) separated the episcopate from the communion over which they preside, by proposing it to other communions, at the same time nobly disclaiming any wish to absorb other communions, and declaring their readiness to forego the modes of worship and discipline peculiar to their own communion, and to co-operate with other communions on the basis of a common faith and order, in discountenancing schism and healing the wounds of the body of Christ.¹ In distinct terms, "as Bishops in the Church of God," they have invited their fellow-Christians to meet them on the outside common ground of membership by baptism in the Holy Catholic Church and there find further agreement in the four articles of unity. Suppose, for argument's sake, that the Presbyterian Church should adopt these articles, and at length select presbyters to be consecrated as bishops. Would the Episcopal college then bring forward the new requirement of an oath of "conformity and obedience to the

¹ Declaration of the House of Bishops, adopted October 20, 1886.

doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States?" Would they amend their own terms by adding to the Holy Scriptures the church canons; to the Nicene Creed, the Articles of Religion; to the Sacraments of our Lord, the Book of Common Prayer; and to the Historic Episcopate, the entire ordinal of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons? Would they thus endeavor, in the face of their Declaration, to absorb other communions or impose upon them the laws, traditions, and usages of their own communion? In that case suppose the Moravian, or Swedish,¹ or Old Catholic Episcopate to have been elsewhere obtained, would they not gladly recognize and welcome it?

In order to make this point still clearer let us recur to the "case of the Episcopal churches" at the close of the Revolution. Their situation as to the question before us was analogous to that of presbyterial churches at the present time. They had assumed a thoroughly presbyterial polity, though as yet without Bishops. It is true, they had also the Prayer-book; and the English bishops would not confer the Episcopal character until assured that the Prayer - Book would be re-

¹ A Lutheran clergyman has said that the proposed procurement of the Historic Episcopate from the Church of Sweden would have the effect of modifying the exclusive claims of the Protestant Episcopal Church among sister Protestant Churches.

tained in its integrity. But that is not now made a condition of the conferment. The Prayer-Book is not even named in the terms proposed at Chicago or at Lambeth. There is nothing on the face of those terms to forbid the Presbyterian church, as it stands to-day, from acquiring the episcopate, if so minded. Nor would it thereby go over in a body to the Protestant Episcopal Church. On the contrary, the revered Bishop of Western New York, if correctly reported,¹ has distinctly said: "We have proposed a course which, if carried out by any of the greater denominations of Christians, would compel us to join them."

ADAPTABILITY OF THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE.

I may now add, that some learned canonists, if I understand them, are already advocating an extension of the American Episcopate to other denominations, as proposed by the late Dr. Muhlenberg, of blessed memory, and as illustrated recently by the extension of the Roman episcopate over Russian Greek congregations in this country, notwithstanding their married priests, trine immersion, presbyterial confirmation, and other tenets not held by Romanists, but held by Episcopalians, Baptists, and Presbyterians. The

¹ Sermon of Bishop Coxe at Buffalo. In New York Tribune, March 22, 1891.

Lambeth Conference itself, if I read aright, has generously opened the way for a similar extension of the Anglican episcopate to other Christian communions abroad and at home, "without insisting upon the formularies which are the special heritage of the Church of England," and even with "large freedom of variation on secondary points of doctrine, worship, and discipline."¹ Both the Chicago and the Lambeth declarations also seem to distinguish the historic episcopate from its Greek, Roman, and Anglican varieties, by providing that it is to be "locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church." This local adaptation has been begun in one of our denominations; but it will not be complete until it extends to all of them, or at least includes the Christian institutions, doctrines, and usages of the whole American people, and so becomes still more American and less Anglican, as well as less Roman. Then, and not till then, will there be a truly American variety of the historic episcopate.

The object of making these distinctions, I need scarcely say, is not to raise debatable questions, some of which are too difficult and delicate for me to handle, or perhaps even to suggest. I am

¹ Lambeth Conferences of 1888, p. 337.

simply aiming to emphasize the fact that the historic episcopate, like the other three articles, is only part of a common heritage, and more or less adaptable to all denominations with their respective standards and usages. In theory at least, it is as adaptable to the Presbyterian Church with its Confession of Faith, and Directory of Worship, as to the Protestant Episcopal Church with its Articles and Prayer-Book. In point of fact, however, such adaptation is not imminent and may not soon befall. Presbyterians as yet value the liturgy more than the episcopate, and could more easily accept the Articles and the Prayer-Book than the Ordinal. But should the day ever happily come when the high contracting parties would be ready for corporate reunion, we may assume that they would have wisdom and grace enough to adjust all canonical questions of ordination and jurisdiction in a spirit of Christian love and harmony.

UNIFYING POWER OF THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE.

The next point to be considered is the fitness of the four articles to serve as a basis of church unity. The fitness of the first three articles for such a purpose is scarcely in question. The chief reformed churches, at least, can estimate the scriptures, the creeds, and the sacraments as capital points of agreement and means of unifica-

tion. But the unifying power of the historic episcopate is not yet so highly appreciated. Be it observed, the intrinsic value of that Christian institution is not now before us. As to what special grace or authority or advantage it conveys, opinions differ among those who view it from the inside, as well as among those who view it from the outside ; and good churchmen may be found on both sides of the pale. Waiving the discussion of such opinions, not as unimportant by any means, but as not relevant to the present question, we are here only to estimate its external value as a unifying bond among the denominations. Never before has it been so presented. The simple fact that it has been so presented, marks an epoch, it may be a silent revolution, in the history of the church. Too often hitherto has it appeared in a polemic light as a bone of contention, an occasion of dissent and schism, and even a barrier to Christian intercourse between families, nations, and races. Now at length, as never before in three centuries, we are invited to behold in it an organic link of connection, a basis of reunion, and a magnetic centre of harmony. I can give but the heads of so pleasing an argument.

In the first place, it is the *de facto* government of three-fourths, if not of four-fifths, of Christendom. Reason about its *de jure* claims as we may,

an immense majority of our fellow-Christians throughout the world, and nearly one-sixth of our fellow-citizens in this country, are tenaciously attached to it, and not at all likely to be detached from it; and these plain facts of the ecclesiastical situation must be dealt with in any scheme of comprehension which aims to be at once practical and complete. Otherwise, everything like church unity is simply out of the question. There can be no reunion of Christendom without the historic episcopate.

In the second place, it bases church unity upon church polity, not upon systematic theology. Until polity has been shaken loose from such theology we can never have organic unity. Exact theological agreement as a basis of church unity is already a failure. Denominations founded upon such agreement have been going to pieces all around us. Such agreement never has existed; not even in the Apostolic church, which allowed doctrinal differences without the unchristian results of schism and sectarianism. Such agreement never can exist; so long as human nature is diverse in its temperaments and many related truths are paradoxical in our logic. Such agreement never ought to exist, for the sake of Christian doctrine itself. Better far that two schools of theology should fairly contend in the same church than rush apart into two hostile

sects. Never fear for our common orthodoxy, while special orthodoxies take care of themselves in the march of knowledge and under the laws of thought. Such agreement has not even been attempted by the strongest churches. No Calvinism has been so high and no Arminianism so low as the Calvinism and Arminianism nourished side by side within the ample church of England. The brief experiment to hold together that church on the theological basis of the Westminster Confession issued in disastrous failure. All history shows that church unity must rest upon an institution, not upon doctrines; and upon an institution ample enough and elastic enough to include all doctrines, even variant doctrines concerning itself. Such an institution is that episcopate, which not only embraces the national varieties of Catholicism, but shows a capacity for embracing the doctrinal diversities of Protestantism in the bonds of a reunited Christendom.

In the third place, it is comprehensive of all forms of polity as well as schools of doctrine. In its structure it involves in due organic relation the congregational, the presbyterial, and the episcopal elements of church government. The two former may exist apart from the latter; but not the latter apart from the two former. Episcopacy includes the other elements as the greater includes the less, and is upheld by them as the

higher is upheld by the lower. Hence Congregationalism as a basis of church unity would on principle be inorganic, if not disorganizing. Presbyterianism, though organic and organizing, is separate and largely unhistoric, and so far as historic, has become too dogmatic and polemic. Episcopalianism also, when independent and unhistoric, becomes sectarian and schismatical, losing its unifying force. But historic episcopacy has ever included, while it surmounted, both the congregational and the presbyterial spheres of the church organism, and as locally adapted to the civil and religious institutions of this country, will neither sacrifice the liberties of the congregation, nor the rights of presbytery. Orthodoxy and liberty can dwell together in presbytery only under the mild sway of the historic episcopate.

In the fourth place, it is tolerant of all types of churchmanship as well as forms of polity and schools of doctrine. If neither enjoins, nor forbids, a doctrine of apostolical succession. Presented as a historic institution apart from any theory of its origin and claims, it allows all such theories without repressing any of them. Not the prelatie theory, not the presbyterian theory, not the rationalistic theory, not the ritualistic theory, alone can claim exclusive property in it without rendering it partisan and sectarian. Were any one of these theories made a basis of

church unity, the church itself would be torn asunder, and its different schools of churchmanship fly apart as mere wrangling sects. The fact, however, that they are found loyally uniting in adherence to an institution which they estimate from so many diverse points of view—this fact proves its capacity to combine the Congregationalists and Presbyterians, still beyond its reach, with those like-minded churchmen already within its bounds. And unless different rules are applied to candidates and incumbents, it may be accepted in the interest of church unity, as it is maintained, on a presbyterian no less than a prelatic theory of its origin and merits. It will never be endangered by churchmen who have had presbyterian training; nor can it fully accomplish its mission in this country without the sort of ecclesiastical backbone which they furnish. The historic episcopate cannot do without the historic presbyterate.

In the fifth place, its exclusion of non-episcopal ministries, though otherwise deemed opprobrious, gives it in fact a unifying quality. By recognizing such ministries it could not help true church unity, but would really hinder and frustrate it. It would only make new schisms in trying to heal old ones. It would at once loosen and scatter the various schools of divinity, polity, and churchmanship which it now holds together

in bonds as tenacious as they are elastic. I state the fact without explaining it: Differences which have elsewhere issued in sectarianism, are somehow restrained like balanced forces, or blended like discordant notes in a higher harmony. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists in their relations as denominationalists are in a chronic state of antagonism and irritation; but the very same Christians, or others like them, in their relations as churchmen, holding to the unity of the church, . . . simply lose all their sectarian rancor, without losing their distinctive beliefs. Denominational variety is thus visibly made consistent with church unity. It is not a matter of speculation. We have before us all the while the object-lesson of a unifying episcopate.

In the sixth place, it is the source and guarantee of the other three terms of church unity. Historically, the Sacraments, the Creeds, and the Sacred Canon emanated from the primitive episcopacy, howsoever that episcopate may have been connected with the apostles. Historically, they afterward continued in connection with episcopacy, though encrusted with error and superstition during the middle ages until the Reformation. Historically, ever since they have been more persistently maintained in Episcopal churches than in other Reformed churches. They may sometimes be found apart from episcopacy, but not episco-

pace apart from them. To render them consistent and complete episcopacy is needed, and as connected with them it imparts strength and concord to them all. At once sustaining them and sustained by them, it is the very keystone of church unity.

In the last place, it is only through the historic episcopate that the primitive church unity can be restored. All parties seem agreed that the congregational, presbyterial, and episcopal elements of polity coexisted normally in the undivided church of the apostles. All must admit that they are now in an abnormal, dismembered state, where they are not more or less obliterated by an exclusive Congregationalism, or Presbyterianism, or Episcopalianism. In order to recover the lost organic unity of these elements, we must retrace the steps by which it was first found. According to the learned Bishop Lightfoot the primitive bishops gradually became centres of unity, and guardians of faith among the scattered congregations and presbyteries of the early church. In like manner the congregationalist, presbyterian, and episcopalian denominations of our day can only recover true organic unity by returning by the same steps to that episcopate as it first arose in the apostles' time. Already one of those denominations has illustrated in its history this primitive evolution ; having existed first

in the embryonic stage of Congregationalism, as a cluster of detached parishes; thence, emerging into Presbyterianism, with its conventions of clerical and lay delegates; and at length acquiring the full ecclesiastical character in the Anglican episcopate. And other denominations, as yet congregational or presbyterial, are advancing, with various rates of progress and degrees of approximation, toward the same distant but inevitable goal of the whole organic development of American Christianity. If we are ever to have the one United Church of the United States, it would seem destined to find its flower and crown in the historic episcopate.

At this point comes into view the next important question: the mode of approaching church unity on the basis of the four articles of the Chicago-Lambeth declaration. Two methods, or schemes, have been proposed: confederation and consolidation. Without opposing either of them, I shall advocate organic reunion and growth as the more natural and hopeful process. Let us briefly compare them.

UNIFICATION BY CONFEDERATION.

According to the first of the three methods, as advocated by a Presbyterian divine,¹ the

¹ Rev. Prof. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., of Union Theological Seminary, New York.

different denominations would meet by deputies in a general convention, and formally adopt the Lambeth proposals as articles of confederation, while retaining in all other respects their respective standards of doctrine, polity, and worship, except so far as they might require modification and adaptation. Such federal councils of a single denomination have already been held by the Anglican body in the Pan-Anglican conference; by the Reformed body in the Pan-Presbyterian Conference; and by the Congregationalists and Methodists in their World's Conventions. Similar conferences may yet be held by the Lutheran churches, and perhaps by some of the Baptist denominations. "If these denominational conferences," says the learned Professor, "should accept the four propositions of the Lambeth Conference; or if accepting them, they should make some additional proposals; if the Presbyterian General Conference should propose to accept the historic episcopate, provided that a presbyterial organization of the church should also be adopted and the two systems be brought into harmony; and if the Congregational General Conference should propose to accept the historic episcopate, provided that the right of the Christian people, and the independence of the local church were guarded with certain definite areas; if we could have a general council of the Christian

churches of America, on the basis of the four propositions of the House of Bishops, with any reasonable additions or modifications that might be proposed; church unity would, in my opinion, essentially be won.”¹

The advantages of this attractive scheme are apparent at the first glance. It proceeds upon the representative and federal principles with which we have become familiar in the history of our political unification; and it harmonizes with the genius of our religious institutions, especially in congregationalist and presbyterian communions. It would reduce the number of sects by compacting them closely in family groups or clusters, according to their hereditary and doctrinal affinities. It would satisfy the denominational spirit by according to it an equal voice and vote in council, whatever may be the numbers or wealth or intelligence represented. It would offer at length the moving spectacle of great denominational leaders, meeting together not for conflict, nor for recrimination, as in former times, but to adjust the ancient disputes of Christendom in a spirit of love and harmony. And it is not unlikely that it may hereafter play some important part in the unifying process.

The difficulties of the scheme soon appear on closer view. It would substitute the artificial

¹ The Churchman, June 21, 1890.

processes of federation and legislation for those of spontaneous growth and culture in the formation of public opinion and in social action. It presupposes radical changes in some denominations, and in others an immense increase of the ecclesiastical spirit. The Roman Catholics, of course, would not send deputies to such a council. The Baptists and Congregationalists could not, without abandoning their own principles; nor might their loose aggregation of churches be held by the decisions of such a council. The Methodists, with their sense of a denominational mission and lack of churchly feeling, are not yet ready for such a council. It would be practically restricted to the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, and the Protestant Episcopal Church, supposing the latter to appear in the conference. And then, should the first three Lambeth articles be adopted, the fourth would soon bristle with the delicate questions of episcopal ordination and jurisdiction, for which the whole presbyterian body at least is not yet prepared. The result would not be ecclesiastical unity, but a mere league, made offensive and defensive by the reassertion of Presbytery against Prelacy on the one side, and against Papacy on the other.

UNIFICATION BY CONSOLIDATION.

According to the second method of unification, proposed by an Episcopal clergyman,¹ a single denomination would become the nucleus around which others would be crystallized and at length consolidated in one ecclesiastical system, while yet retaining their admirable variety in doctrine, ritual, culture, and life. As the Protestant Episcopal Church alone possesses the four Lambeth conditions of agreement, it is natural to take it as such a rallying centre, and hope to merge other Christian bodies into corporate union with it. The old-fashioned view seems to have been, that it is potentially the national church, destined, as it stands to-day, with its canons, liturgy, articles, and orders, to dissolve and recompose the other one hundred and forty-two denominations around it, and transform them into Protestant Episcopal churchmen by the sheer force of propagandism. Such a view would demand the faith and zeal of a Hildebrand. The later and larger view seems to be that, by incorporating the four principles in the existing constitution of the church as the only ecclesiastical requirements, other denominations accepting those requirements might be included within its pale, substan-

¹ The Rev. W. R. Huntington, D.D., Rector of Grace Church, New York.

tially as they now are, with an allowed diversity in their methods of worship and work. "Every one of the denominations," says the eloquent advocate of this view, "has its own hallowed memories, its own roll of martyrs, its own cherished manner of worship, its own long-tried methods of missionary work. The theory of consolidation supposes not only their permitted but their constitutionally guarded continuance."¹

No true lover of church unity could let mere traditional prejudice or sectarian jealousy mar this noble ideal of charity and harmony. If any one of the denominations is thus destined to become like Aaron's rod that swallowed up the rods of the magicians, this were better than that the serpent brood of sects and schisms should go on multiplying. Nor could any one of them better achieve such a consolidation than that one which stands among them, not only as the very flower of English civilization, but as the highest type of organized Christianity; which combines in its polity congregational, presbyterial, and episcopal elements that have elsewhere become separate and disjointed; which conserves in its liturgy the choicest formularies of the reformed as well as the historic churches; and of which, as an intermediary between Protestantism and Catholicism and in touch with both, it has been strik-

¹ The Peace of the Church, p. 42.

ingly said,¹ it was like one of those precious chemicals capable of fusing substances otherwise unassociable. No wonder that even the Jesuit De Maistre was forced to admit its wonderful future, like Balaam blessing the distant tents of Israel which he had been fain to curse. No wonder that non-episcopal divines, as well as far-seeing bishops, are beginning to recognize "the majestic mission of the Anglican Church and of her daughter in America." Whatever other great and powerful denominations may yet wheel into the line of historic Christianity, the Protestant Episcopal Church must ever lead them in the march toward ultimate unity.

The difficulties of consolidation are more in the process than in the result, more in the way of approach than in the end attained. Though its aim be catholic, its point of departure would be denominational. Though in theory tolerant of other communions, it would in practice absorb them. However self-sacrificing in its spirit, it would look to them like zealous proselytism and ecclesiastical aggrandizement. While projecting before them an attractive goal of unity amid variety, it would seem to invite them thither only through the successive stages of concession, submission, absorption, extinction. In their view it would be

¹ De Maistre, as quoted by Bishop Coxe in a paper read at the Chicago Congress on Organic Unity.

somewhat like gaining the boon of immortality at the loss of personal identity. Here and there some detached Congregationalist society, ripe for the change, might melt away into the greater absorbing body. But compact national churches would not so easily surrender their corporate life. The Methodists would need to undo much of their history before they could return to the church whence they went out. The Lutheran and Reformed bodies, Dutch and German, never having gone out of the Anglican Church, could not very well be asked to return. The great Presbyterian communion, ever since it was driven out, has set up rival claims which it would not lower without at least a salute. And the greater Roman Catholic communion would simply reverse the invitation and bid us all come back to the mother church. Moreover, should the invitation be heeded, the little consolidating body, with all its conservative vigor, would soon be resisting the intrusion of so much foreign and uncongenial material, or find it not very easy of assimilation. At least one school of churchmen would view it suspiciously as a Trojan horse of masked sectarianism. Should the consolidating process become rapid and complete, the smaller absorbing body would soon be itself absorbed by the larger entering bodies; the transforming nucleus would be itself transformed by alien ideas and usages;

at the rallying centre would spring up repellent as well as attracting influences, and in the end Episcopacy would be obliged to reassert itself against denominationalism as well as against Romanism.

UNIFICATION BY ORGANIC GROWTH.

Between these extreme methods there is a third mode of unification, which I have ventured to call the process of organic reunion and growth. It would seek to combine the good in the other two methods without the evil. In distinction from the first, it would be an organic process of growth rather than an artificial act of legislation; and in distinction from the second, it would be an organic reunion of ecclesiastical elements in different Christian bodies, rather than a crude absorption by one Christian body of all the rest; a knitting together of the congregational, presbyterial, and episcopal polities wherever found, rather than a welding of the existing medley of churches. Its rallying centre would be in the midst of the denominations, not aside in any one of them. Its crystallizing nucleus would simply be the four Lambeth articles of unity as detached from the Episcopal Church, no less than from the Roman Church, or from the Reformed churches, or from any other churches which may possess or acquire some or all of them. Especially would it

find such a nucleus or germ in that catholic episcopate, which, if confined to the Protestant Episcopal Church, would itself become denominational and sectarian; but if extended over the other denominations, would recombine their congregational, presbyterial, and episcopal institutions not merely in one ideal polity, but as restored parts of the one undivided Apostolic church. In a word, while confederation would arrange the denominations in a mere artificial mosaic, and consolidation would compact them as a crude conglomerate, organic reunion would develop them as an organism into the one body of Christ.

ORGANIC REUNION OF PRESBYTERY AND EPISCOPACY.

Take, for illustration, the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches,¹ now in hopeful negotiation

¹The Presbyterian Church is more closely allied to the Protestant Episcopal Church, both historically and doctrinally, than any other Christian body in the country. Its standards, as framed by the Westminster Assembly, were once legally established in the Church of England, as they are now maintained by the established Church of Scotland, with the Sovereign as a communicant in both churches. The two communions hold substantially the same doctrine of the ministry and sacraments, the one attaching the doctrine to presbytery and the other attaching it to episcopacy; and in other matters of polity and worship there has long been a growing assimilation and agreement.

The General Assembly of 1890 met the advances of the Gen-

on the basis of the Chicago-Lambeth proposals. Were these two bodies at once either confederated or consolidated, it would be an inconceivable catastrophe to both of them. It is not so inconceivable, however, that they should be brought together at points where they are in touch and admit of connection. Already they have such points of contact and agreement in three of the Lambeth articles; in the Scriptures, the Creeds, and the Sacraments. It only remains to attach them in the Episcopate. And that attachment might be

eral Convention by passing without dissent the following resolution :

“ The Assembly approves in general the spirit and position of the Committee on Church Unity in its correspondence with the representatives of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and desires a continuance of these negotiations with reference to a union on the basis of the four propositions of the House of Bishops, in order that all questions at issue may be discussed in a temper of Christian charity and brotherly affection, with a view to their full and final solution.”

The last General Assembly at Washington continued its Special Committee on Church Unity, Rev. Dr. Joseph T. Smith and Rev. Prof. Francis Brown, and approved their report of progress, which contained this recommendation :

“ The Assembly hereby recommends the holding of conventions, according to the terms proposed by the Episcopal Commission for the promotion of Christian unity. It also enjoins upon the members of the church represented in the Assembly, prayer, both in public and in private, for the realization of this unity.”

begun by means of concurrent ordinations, on the principle advocated by a learned and accomplished bishop of St. Andrews (the late Dr. Charles Wordsworth¹) for the reconciliation of Presbyterians and Episcopalians in the Church of Scotland. In such ordinations candidates would

¹ "The proposition of Bishop Wordsworth, made through a committee of the last Lambeth Conference, was substantially this: that the full ministerial standing of clergymen Presbyterially ordained be now recognized, provided that hereafter all their ordinations should be by bishops. . . . This proposition was not accepted by the Conference, and probably for two good reasons, if for no other: because it was not prepared to act so suddenly in so serious a matter, and also because, being only a Conference, it had no authority so to act. But it should also be said, that ten out of the twelve members of the committee voted for it, and that the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed his 'very full and hearty sympathy with it.' Altogether it is no doubt a very special expedient; but it is the only one so far proposed with any promise of likelihood in it. God grant that some way out of the dilemma may be found with honor to Him and to all!"—*Address on Church Unity by the Right Rev. Boyd Vincent, S. T. D., Assistant Bishop of Southern Ohio.*

The suggestion above made differs from this proposition in two respects: In the Episcopalian view, the authorization would not be universal and indiscriminate, but gradual, as special cases arise; and in the Presbyterian view, the question of valid ordination would not be raised but left untouched in the sphere of private judgment, as at present. Many Episcopalians and Presbyterians already hold the principles involved in a concurrent ordination. Why not act upon those principles formally as well as practically, and in a frank and generous spirit?

be presented to the bishop, with the concurrence of the presbytery, by priests who have had formerly presbyterian ordination, or perhaps by presbyterian ministers who have had formerly episcopal ordination. The transaction might be kept within the rubric as well as the book, or at least within the Lambeth proposals, and would involve a practical sanction of all conceivable interests and claims, with no possibility of doubt or controversy. Both parties would have acted upon their respective theories of the Christian ministry, without conceding anything to each other, and without reflecting upon one another. The most extreme Episcopalian, from his point of view, would have fully legitimated a ministry which on other grounds he was prepared to appreciate and welcome; and the most extreme Presbyterian, from his point of view, would have only gained enlarged authority for a ministry which he believed to be already valid and regular. As in a marriage of rival houses, former causes of warfare would disappear, and the contracting parties henceforth would have common aims and interests.

Nor would there be anything disingenuous or very novel in a concurrent ordination thus understood to represent Presbyterians and Episcopalians. Episcopalians see something like it whenever a postulant brings with him the commenda-

tion of twelve of his former co-presbyters. Presbyterians see something like it, whenever an Episcopal minister after due examination receives the authority of presbytery. Both Presbyterians and Episcopalians see something like it, whenever High and Low Church bishops and presbyters unite in conferring holy orders. What would be the essential difference, either in intention or in effect, between co-ordination in this last case and in the case before described?

The difficulty would not be in the rite of ordination so much as in the sphere of jurisdiction. And there it might not prove insuperable, if met cautiously and by degrees. The connection might first be made where there would be least embarrassment. On foreign mission fields, surely such ordinations ought not to bring any conflict of presbyterial and episcopal jurisdiction. On home mission fields there are as yet no vested rights and interests to prevent an arranged coincidence of jurisdiction. In the public service of the Army and Navy, and in purely academic positions, the coincidence would seem to be already practicable. There would be no more danger of free lances then than now in this free country. Moreover co-ordination would make re-ordination easy and reputable, when desirable. Gradually, as such examples became familiar and contagious, the parishes and presbyteries within a synod or

diocese would come under bishops of their own choice through their own action. At length, by such a reunion of presbytery and episcopacy in all denominations, the very core of Protestantism would be unified on a church basis, and could bring its crude remainder under potent church influences. The chief ecclesiastical bodies in the land, all the historic Reformed churches, would stand compacted as a solid phalanx against sectarianism on the one side and infidelity on the other.

IDEAL FULFILMENT OF CHURCH UNITY.

In order to complete this ideal sketch, let us now imagine the Lambeth articles of unity to have been thus adopted by the chief Christian bodies between the extremes of Protestantism and Catholicism. In that event, the historic episcopate would have been extended over all congregational, presbyterial, and episcopal denominations; but those very names would have lost their sectarian meaning, and serve only to indicate organic members and functions in the ecclesiastical body. The Apostolic and Nicene Creeds would have been accepted, the one as a symbol of church membership, and the other as a sufficient statement of the Christian faith; but while some communions, according to their origin, might still train under the polemic standards of Augsburg, Heidelberg,

Geneva, and Westminster, other communions might be content to display such standards as mere antique trophies in the castle of orthodoxy. The two sacraments of our Lord would be everywhere ministered with His appointed words and elements; but if in such ministration some parishes might still keep the Prayer-Book intact with its Protestant and Catholic formularies compacted as a finished product of liturgic lore and skill, yet other parishes might choose only its Protestant formularies, the Exhortations, Confessions, Prayers, Thanksgivings, Lessons, and Commandments derived from the Lord's Day Service of the Reformers, popular in style, and tending to spirituality in worship; while still other parishes might prefer the Catholic formularies, Matins and Evensong, Litany, Holy Communion, with their Versicles, Kyries, and Glorias, serving as an Englished Breviary and Missal, choral in structure, and admitting of the highest artistic embellishment when freed from their Protestant accretions. In a word, the four articles would have become rallying centres for all our chief denominational varieties of doctrine and ritual, and served to reconcile a just Protestantism with a true Catholicism in one reunited Church of the United States. Meanwhile, too, let us hope, the great Roman Church, no longer antagonistic, already possessed of the essential principles of unity—the Scriptures, the

Creeds, the two Sacraments, and the Episcopate—and being modified by American influences, would be ready to connect her old Catholicism with our new Catholicism, under the mild primacy of her Chief Pastor, in defence of a common faith, a common country, and a common civilization.

SLOW GROWTH OF CHURCH UNITY.

The approach to Church unity must be slow, and the way may be long and difficult. Not in one generation, perhaps not in several generations, can it be effected; not by spasmodic efforts, hostile to all religious life and growth; not by sporadic conversions, always personal in their significance, sometimes dubious, never unifying; not by coalitions with sectarian fragments, tending only to denominational aggrandisement and encumbering the ecclesiastical body with undigested material. No: Church unity can only be attained by a steady growth of Church principles in all denominations, by a generous recognition of Church institutions wherever found, Congregational and Presbyterian as well as Episcopal; and by a noble comprehension of such principles and institutions, together with their respective adherents, within one large and tolerant Church system. Confederation may play its part in some stages of the organic process; not decreeing unity by treaty or statute, but ratifying its spontaneous achieve-

ments ; and consolidation may appear at the goal of the process ; not as merging different denominations in the Episcopal Church, or in the Presbyterian Church, or in the Roman Church, but only as merging all churches and denominations in the one American Catholic Church.

The outlook for Church unity at the present time may not seem very hopeful. If we confine our attention to passing occurrences it will appear quite discouraging. Religious controversy has broken out afresh in some of the Churches, while yet they were devising means of agreement. Even the words of peace from Chicago and Lambeth, surcharged with partisan meaning and distorted by sectarian misapprehension, have become like rallying standards hidden in the smoke of battle. But let us not judge by superficial and local signs. Great religious movements must be measured by the march of generations through centuries, not by current events of the day and the hour. If we will take into view the historic past together with the present, we shall see that the entire Protestant body, for more than a hundred years, has been steadily recoiling from the extreme sectarianism into which it was driven by the impulses of the Reformation, and that returning Church unity is made inevitable by the logic of tendencies, if not yet by the logic of events.

LOGICAL TENDENCIES TO CHURCH UNITY.

First among such logical tendencies is the decline of the polemic spirit. Despite some present appearances this is not a polemic age. Theological controversy is not now, as it once was, the most serious pursuit of life, when men crossed swords over a dogmatic distinction and consigned heretical writers with their books to the flames. Theological controversy is no longer the wordy combat that it was among the divines of the last generation, when rival schools flew apart as hostile Churches. Nothing is now more censured and deprecated than such controversy. Bishops, Presbyteries, and Councils are slow in bringing erring brethren to book, although the questions are as vital as incarnation, probation, and inspiration. When the Church trial does come, the call to orthodoxy is blended with cries for liberty and peace. This is not the polemic, but the irenic period in the history of doctrine. The age of division is gone; that of reunion has come. Christian divines meeting in conferences, alliances, congresses are trying to see how much they agree rather than how much they differ. And the spirit of fraternity which is abroad among them will be satisfied with nothing short of true unity.

DECLINE OF THE DENOMINATIONAL SPIRIT.

Another of the logical tendencies toward Church unity is the decline of the denominational spirit. This has largely ceased to be a mere sectarian spirit. The denominations do indeed continue among us, with their denominational titles and emblems conspicuously paraded, especially on anniversary occasions and in convivial moments. But some of them have lost their *raison d'être* by being translated to the New World, where their Dutch, German, French, and Scotch dialects are no longer spoken, and their political environment has become wholly American. Others have lost their sectarian bitterness with the dying out of the polemic feuds which made them Lutheran, Calvinistic, and Wesleyan, and through the social intercourse of their adherents. All of them have departed from their primitive standards and usages, and now linger as little more than mere anachronisms. There is not one of them that would be recognized by their respective founders and fathers, the Puritan, the Covenanter, the Methodist of a century ago. Now, the moment any system begins to be thus false to its own historic life and traditions, that moment it begins to die and its self-laudation is but a sign of its decadence. Already it is becoming unpopular, not to say unchristian, to assert bald denominationalism

against Church unity ; and the disappearance of denominationalism is the disappearance of the last obstacle to Church unity.

REVIVAL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL SPIRIT.

With the decline of the polemic and denominational spirit has come a wonderful rise and growth of the ecclesiastical spirit. Throughout the Christian world there is a great revival of churchly ideas and catholic usages. Beginning fifty years ago in the school of Keble and Pusey, it has passed from the Church of England into the Church of Scotland. Even in that stronghold of Presbyterian worship, St. Giles' Church, at Edinburgh, the visitor to-day will find all the correct appliances of high ritual ; an altar clothed in the color of the church season ; lessons read from an eagle-lectern ; creed and psalter musically rendered ; a sermon on some Tractarian theme ; and mayhap the very collect to which Jennie Geddes so forcibly responded. Our own churches are feeling a like reaction. The Puritan of our time loves to call his meeting-house a church ; keeps Christmas and Good Friday as well as Thanksgiving and Fast Day ; and sometimes forgets the local in the historic church. If he becomes a Unitarian, he has churchly tastes and affinities. The Hollander is restoring his antique liturgy. The Lutheran is looking after his

lost episcopate. The Methodist is listening to a learned ministry with liturgical aids to devotion. The Presbyterian is reclaiming his version of the Prayer-book and pondering the advantages of episcopacy. The churchly Episcopalian is going to confession and early mass and looking forward to the archbishopric. Many Protestants would like to have brotherhoods and sisterhoods, and can heartily join our Roman Catholic friends in praising SS. Augustine, Aquinas, and Bernard, and even the Holy Father himself in his present American policy. There is not a Christian denomination in the land which is not becoming more or less consciously ecclesiastical in its aims and tendencies. And the growth of the ecclesiastical spirit simply means the growth of Church unity.

POPULAR TENDENCIES TO CHURCH UNITY.

Besides the logical tendencies to Church unity among Christian scholars and thinkers, we may discern certain more popular tendencies, none the less potent, because unconscious, and even illogical. Unlike their educated leaders the Christian masses are moving toward unity, not by the slow steps of reasoning, but with the swiftness of intuition and the force of passion. Sometimes they may seem to be unreasonable and blind in their impatience of all existing re-

straints and obstacles. Paradoxical as it may sound, they are even now ready for the Chicago-Lambeth terms without knowing it, and while repudiating each one of them. Do they not cling to the Holy Scriptures as the only rule of faith, while seizing those Scriptures as if handed down out of Heaven and utterly ignoring the historic Church through which alone they have acquired them? Do they not confess the Christian facts and truths set forth in the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds, while refusing either to say or sing those creeds, and treating them as mere ritualistic forms? Do they not receive the two Sacraments of Christ with His own instituting words and emblems, while rejecting the solemn and tender liturgy which has preserved those Sacraments amid the prayers and praises of saints and martyrs in all ages? Do they not call upon Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians to have done with their trivial disputes and come together like Christians in one Church, while still sneering at an all-unifying episcopate as but the dream of a few sentimental ecclesiastics? In a word, although casting aside the words "one Catholic and Apostolic Church" as rags of popery, yet are they not in heart and hope ever yearning after what is meant by the words "one Catholic and Apostolic Church?" Some day these verbal disguises by which they are hidden

from one another and kept apart will melt away like mists in the sunrise.

THE COMING CAMPAIGN OF EDUCATION.

It has been well said that we are entering "a campaign of education." In the most elementary sense, we all need information; clergymen as well as laymen, Presbyterians as well as Congregationalists, Episcopalians as well as Presbyterians, Catholics as well as Protestants. All churches and denominations need to become better acquainted with one another. Therefore, it is with a wise forethought that the Lambeth Conference "recommends as of great importance in tending to bring about reunion, the dissemination of information" not only "respecting the standards of doctrine and the formularies in use in the Anglican Church, but, on the other hand, respecting the authoritative standards of doctrine, worship, and government adopted by the other bodies of Christians into which the English-speaking races are divided." The former part of this Recommendation has already found its fulfilment in a "Church Unity Society," which cannot be too highly praised or too vigorously pressed forward in its high mission. The latter part of the Recommendation might find fulfilment in a less formal association or circle, freed from any suspicion of denominational propagandism by being

composed of representatives of the three polities, Congregational and Presbyterial as well as Episcopal, and aiming to give to the public only the results of special research and studious conference.

But more even than information do we need that spirit of prayer out of which alone can be born a true unity. Such a spirit will dispose us to minimize our differences and magnify our agreements. Such a spirit will melt away our prejudices and jealousies. The need of such a spirit has been recognized by the highest Presbyterian authority, and the highest Episcopal authority has already voiced it for us in words which express the desire of all Christian hearts:

“O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great danger we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord, that as there is but one Body and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all: so we may henceforth be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”



In Preparation

THE UNITED CHURCH OF THE UNITED STATES

OR THE PROBLEM OF

American Church Unity

By Prof. CHARLES W. SHIELDS, D.D., LL.D.

IT has been becoming evident to many thoughtful observers that the chief Christian problem of the age is the Reunion of Christendom, and that the most favorable conditions for its solution are found in this new world, where the churches and denominations of the old world have become compacted together within a new political environment, under democratic influences, and with perfect freedom of action and intercourse. The growth of public interest in the question during the past ten years has been surprising. If the proposed volume have no higher value it may serve to mark the course of opinion in this new direction and to afford some outlook for the future. It will contain the results not only of private study, but of conference with representative thinkers holding all the possible views in respect to Church Unity.

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—IN DOCTRINE, IN POLITY, AND IN RITUAL.

II.

DENOMINATIONAL OPINIONS ON CHURCH UNITY—By
REPRESENTATIVE EPISCOPALIANS, PRESBYTERIANS,
AND CONGREGATIONALISTS.

III.

THE CHICAGO-LAMBETH PROPOSALS FOR CHURCH
UNITY.

IV.

THE THREE CHURCH POLITIES AND THE HISTORIC
EPISCOPATE.

V.

THE HISTORIC PRESBYTERATE AND THE HISTORIC
EPISCOPATE.

VI.

THE CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS AND THE HISTORIC
LITURGY.

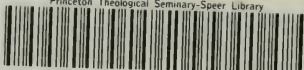
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